

Public comment on Oak Woodlands items on Fort Ord Committee agenda 23 March 2017  
(County of Monterey, Board of Supervisors)

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## Comment on items not on the agenda –Oak clearing along Intergarrison Rd

By my estimate, 0.77 acres of oak woodland were cleared on county land in late 2016 for a temporary road associated with construction of the roundabout at the intersection of 8<sup>th</sup> Ave and Intergarrison Rd (additional acres were cleared on land owned by others).

My understanding is that some mitigation is associated with this activity.

The oaks that were cleared were part of the same stand of oaks that was saved from clearing by the Board of Supervisors as a result of substantial public opposition to the Whispering Oaks project.

It seems ironic that the public may have been excluded from involvement in planning for the oak clearing associated with the roundabout project, given that part of it occurred on county land (to the best of my knowledge). A plan for clearing these oaks, even if mitigated, should have been subject to public input, for example via a Fort Ord Committee meeting such as the present one.

I'd like to request that the public be provided with:

1. A mitigation plan, if one exists
2. An explanation as to why an opportunity for public input was not apparently provided

### ***Images of the cleared area before / after commencement of construction:***



## Comment on Agenda Item 2 – CDVA Oak Restoration

### 1. Preface

- a. I appreciate the good work that is being done here, and the level of detail that has been achieved so far by staff and consultants. My critical comments are not intended to reflect on the staff or the consultants. They are merely observations on progress to date, on work that I hope will progress further, and to which we all may continue to contribute constructively and positively. Environmental planning on Fort Ord is a daunting task for all concerned.

### 2. Soils

- a. The consultant report makes several simplifying statements about soils that misrepresent the original mitigation requirement:
  - i. The mitigation requirement states: “Compensatory tree replacement for the remaining 362 trees shall be conducted at an offsite location within the former Fort Ord property exhibiting soil characteristics (predominately the Oceano series) that would support the same type of coast live oak woodland community.” At one point, the memo states “The mitigation requires that the soils be predominantly Oceano soils.”. This is an incorrect simplification of the requirement. The requirement is that the site exhibit soil characteristics that would support oak woodland. The parenthetical statement “predominately the Oceano series” is merely pointing out that the soils types on Fort Ord that support oak woodland tend mainly to be soils of the Oceano series. At a broad scale, it is certainly true that the vast majority of oak woodland on Fort Ord grew and grows on soil mapping units labelled “Oceano”, and that broad-scale oak restoration planning should be fundamentally guided by such mapping units. But oak woodland may also grow on map units labelled something other than Oceano, and for clarification on this, site-specific planning should be based on historical aerial photography where possible.

- ii. The memo make several statements like this: “The soils on the site consist of Baywood soils”. Such statements are an incorrect simplification of the county soil map and its accompanying text (SCS 1978). The county map presumably used by the consultant (either directly or in digitized form via the SSURGO database) is approximate. The text for many soil mapping units points out that multiple soil types occur within those units. For example, the text for Baywood Sand states “Included with this soil in mapping were areas of Oceano soils and Dune land.” The opposite text is included in the description for Oceano units. The sites under consideration fall near the mapped boundary between units labelled Oceano and units labelled Baywood Sand. Both soil types are derived from sand dunes. It would be wise to assume that on any given mapped unit near this boundary, both types may be encountered, regardless of the label on the mapped unit. This concept precludes and invalidates simple map-based statements such like “the soils on the site consist of [a single soil name]”.
- iii. Where possible (as is the case here), historical aerial photography should be used as the primary reference for potential restoration endpoints in relatively undisturbed sites, or sites where inference can be reliably made from adjacent relatively undisturbed sites. The county soil map should be used only as a secondary source in site-specific planning. The county soil map was itself made using aerial photography. Its text states: “The soil map in the back of this publication was prepared from the aerial photographs.” (Cook, SCS 1978).

b. “Mapped Oak Woodland”

- i. The memo makes several references to “mapped oak woodland”. The source of this mapping should be stated, and the map should be made available for public review. A sufficiently accurate public map of oak woodlands on Fort Ord has perhaps never been produced. The 1992 Jones & Stokes map is perhaps the best

public map, and it is approximate in general, inaccurate in some places, and outdated in others.

- ii. See “Fort Ord Tree Cover” map below for an illustration of the how quantification of oak cover depending on the mapping approach. In this map, the underlying green texture essentially indicates probability of tree cover (usually oaks, except in developed areas); and the overlay shows the 1992 Jones & Stokes mapping used in the Fort Ord Reuse Plan and several subsequent documents.

### c. Trails

- i. Recreational trails run through most of the proposed sites. Some are heavily used. Trails should be shown on oak restoration planning maps.
- ii. Oak restoration should not in general preclude or obvert trails, and this should be specifically recognized in restoration plans (unless there are compelling reasons to avoid trails in specific restoration areas). At the site-specific level, trails and oak conservation are generally compatible land uses. Trail users are strong advocates for oak woodland conservation, and enhancement of the trail experience is a key benefit of oak woodland conservation. At a more-regional level trail density can be modulated to enhance wildlife habitat by limiting trail density in certain areas identified as having regional ecological conservation priority.
- iii. A detailed and current map of all trails in the region is shown below. This map can be obtained from [www.fortord.info](http://www.fortord.info).

## 3. Specific Options

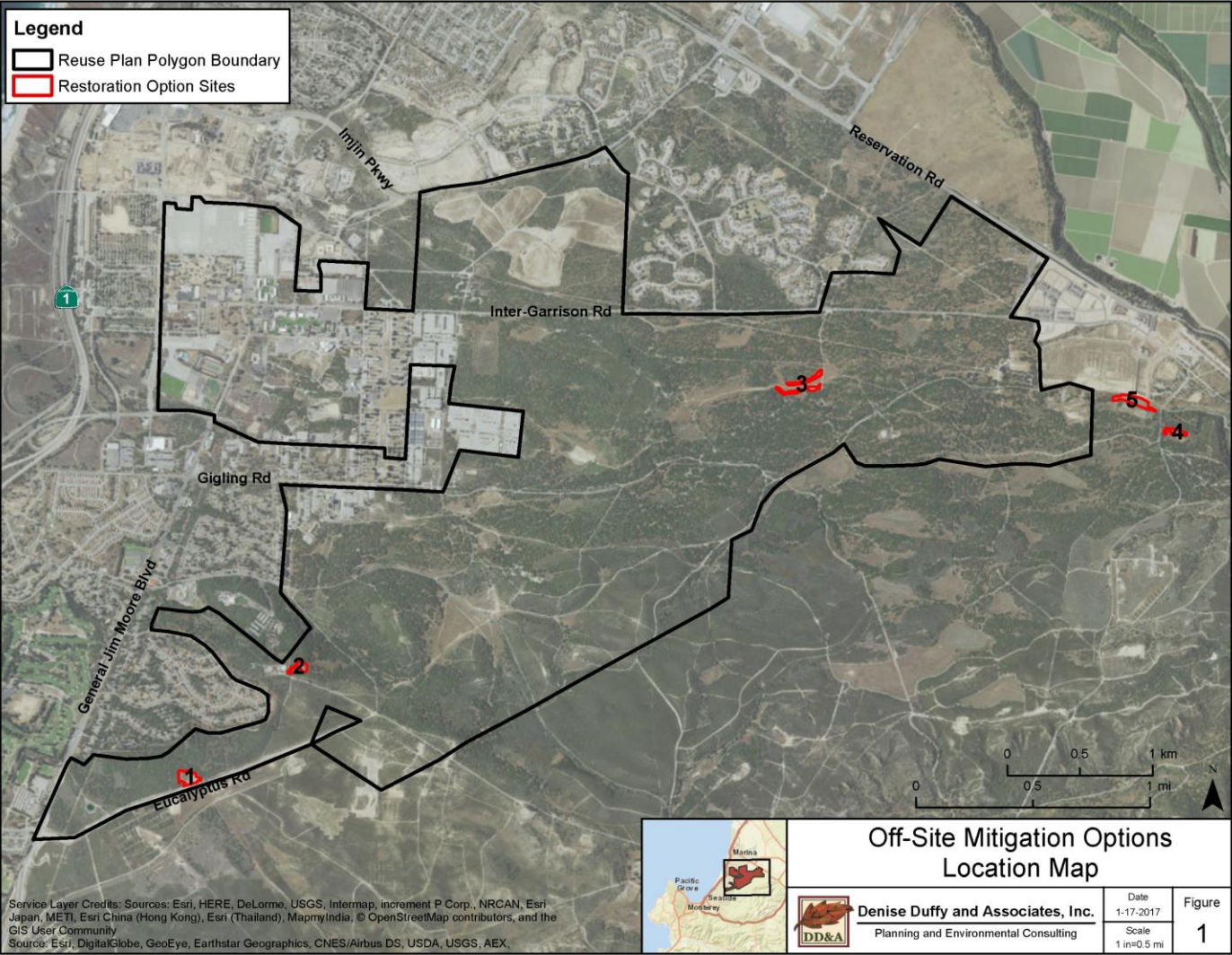
### a. Option #5: East Garrison #1

- i. Unsuitable for desired purpose
- ii. Sufficient restoration less likely to succeed than in other options

- iii. Less well-connected to other oak woodland than other sites
  - iv. Site was very unlikely to have supported dense oak woodland prior to Army use (see maps to follow). Statement in conclusion of consultant memo is not supported: “The East Garrison #1 site very likely supported dense coast live oak woodland prior to being graded and converted to a shooting range.”
  - v. The reason for there being minimal historical oak cover at this site is that it lies predominantly in a topographic hollow or “swale” in which the soils are poorly drained and in which cold air accumulates on frost nights, limiting the growth of trees. Such swales in this part of Fort Ord are typically occupied by vernal pools and grasslands, not oak woodlands. A vernal pool formerly existed in essentially the same swale as the Option #5 site, about 0.2 miles to the west (clearly visible in 1941 imagery, and evident in 1937 imagery).
- b. Option #4: East Garrison #2
- i. I agree with consultant’s conclusion. Site is too small.
- c. Option #3: Trail
- i. I agree with consultant’s conclusion: “site has not historically supported oak woodland habitat.” (see maps below)
- d. Option #2: Tanks
- i. I agree with consultant’s conclusion. Site is too small.
- e. Option #1: Eucalyptus Road
- i. This is the best option of the five presented by the consultant
  - ii. Surrounded on three sides by dense oak woodland”, and formerly supported part of that same woodland (see maps below). A scenic “Elfin Forest Trail” runs through the area. Area is also close to oak-wooded high-visibility ridgeline on south side of Eucalyptus Road, which of significant value as an natural open-space amenity within the overall Fort Ord redevelopment context.

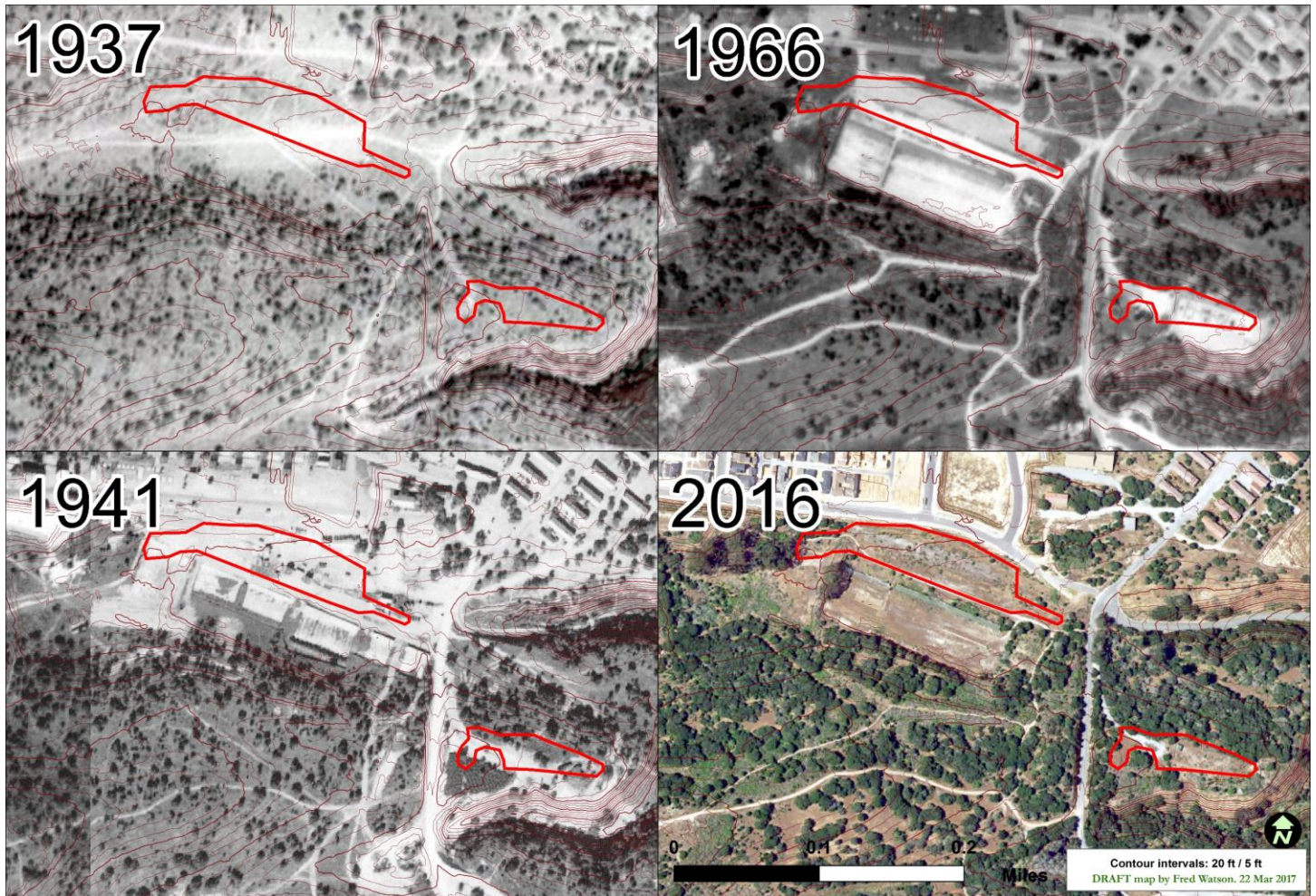


Overview map from consultant's memo



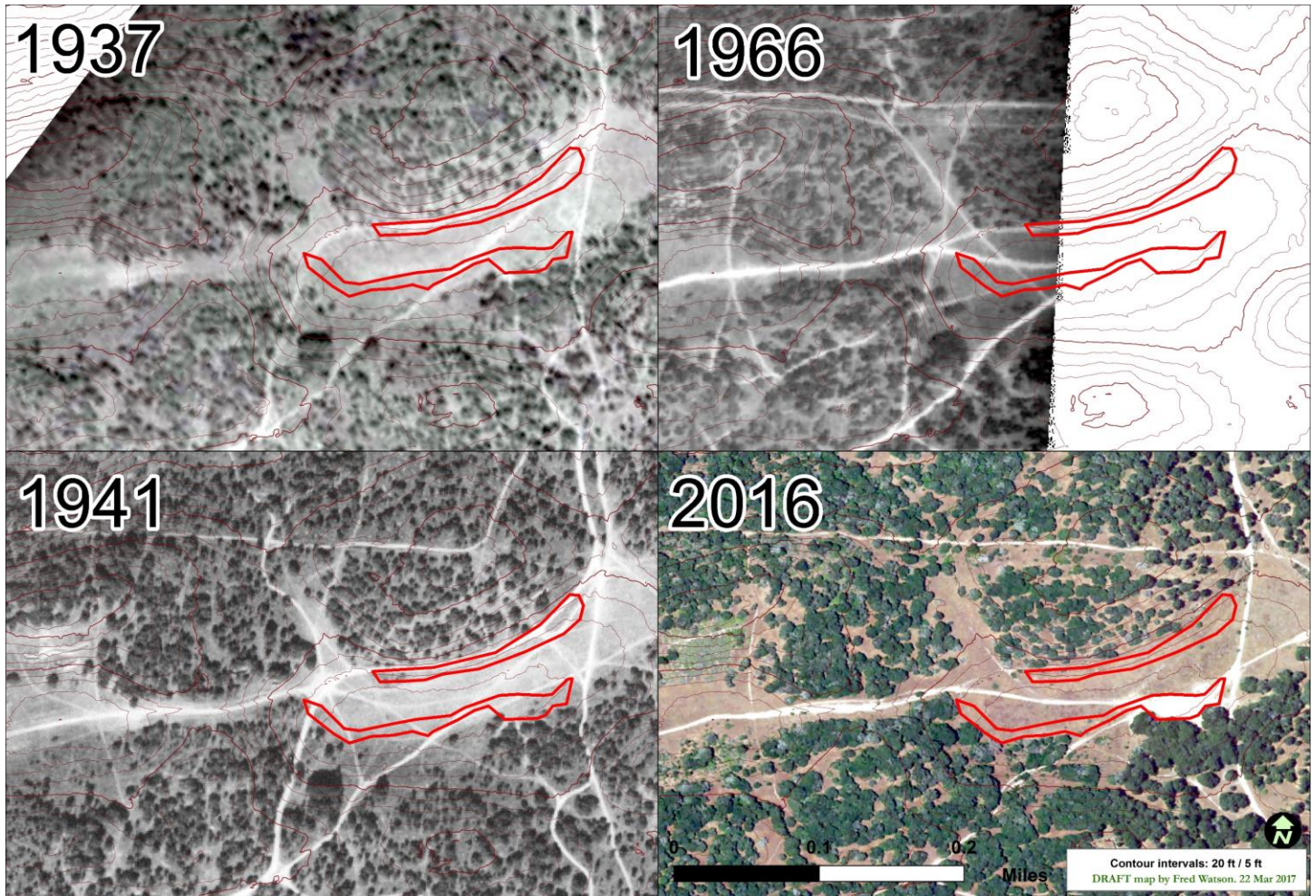


## Options 4&5



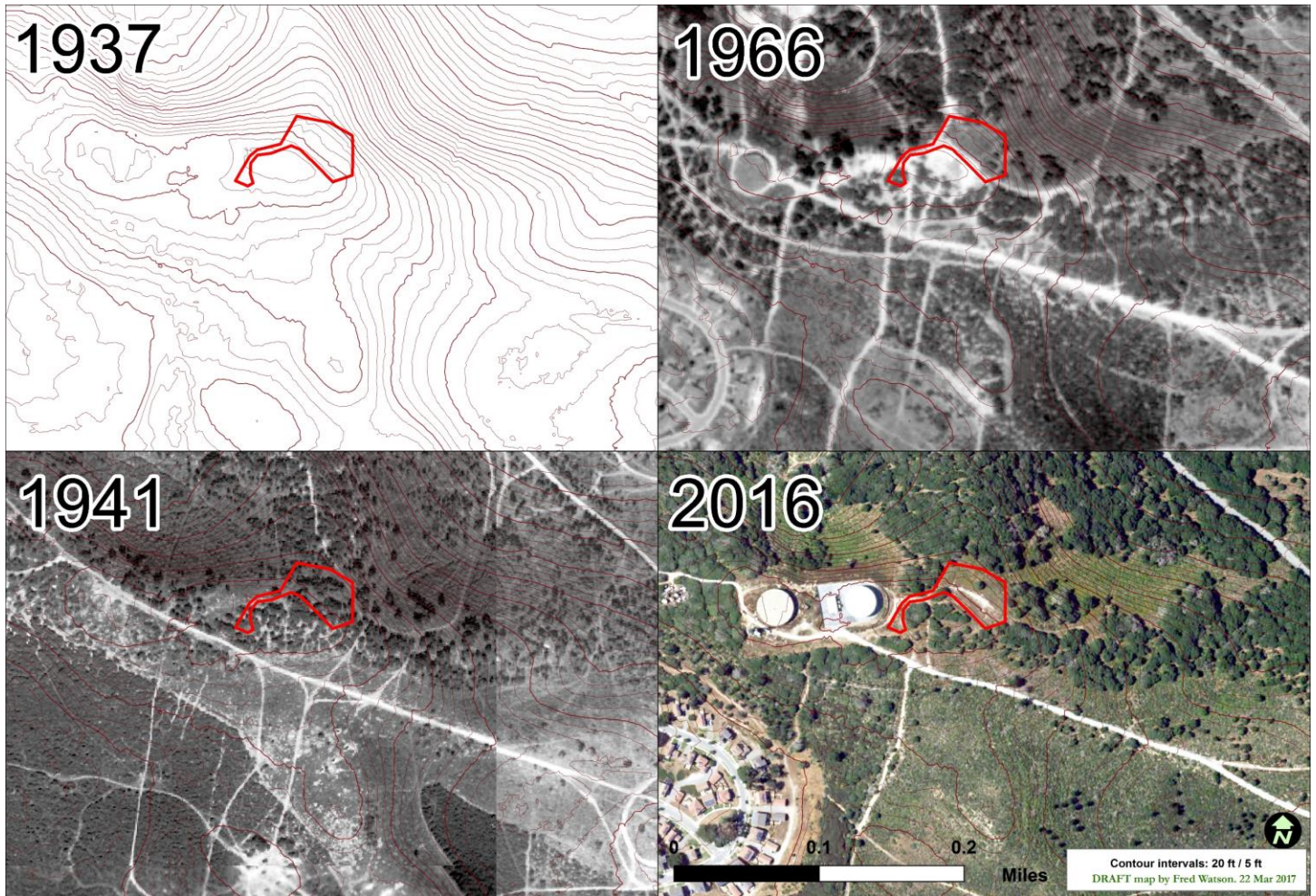


## Option 3



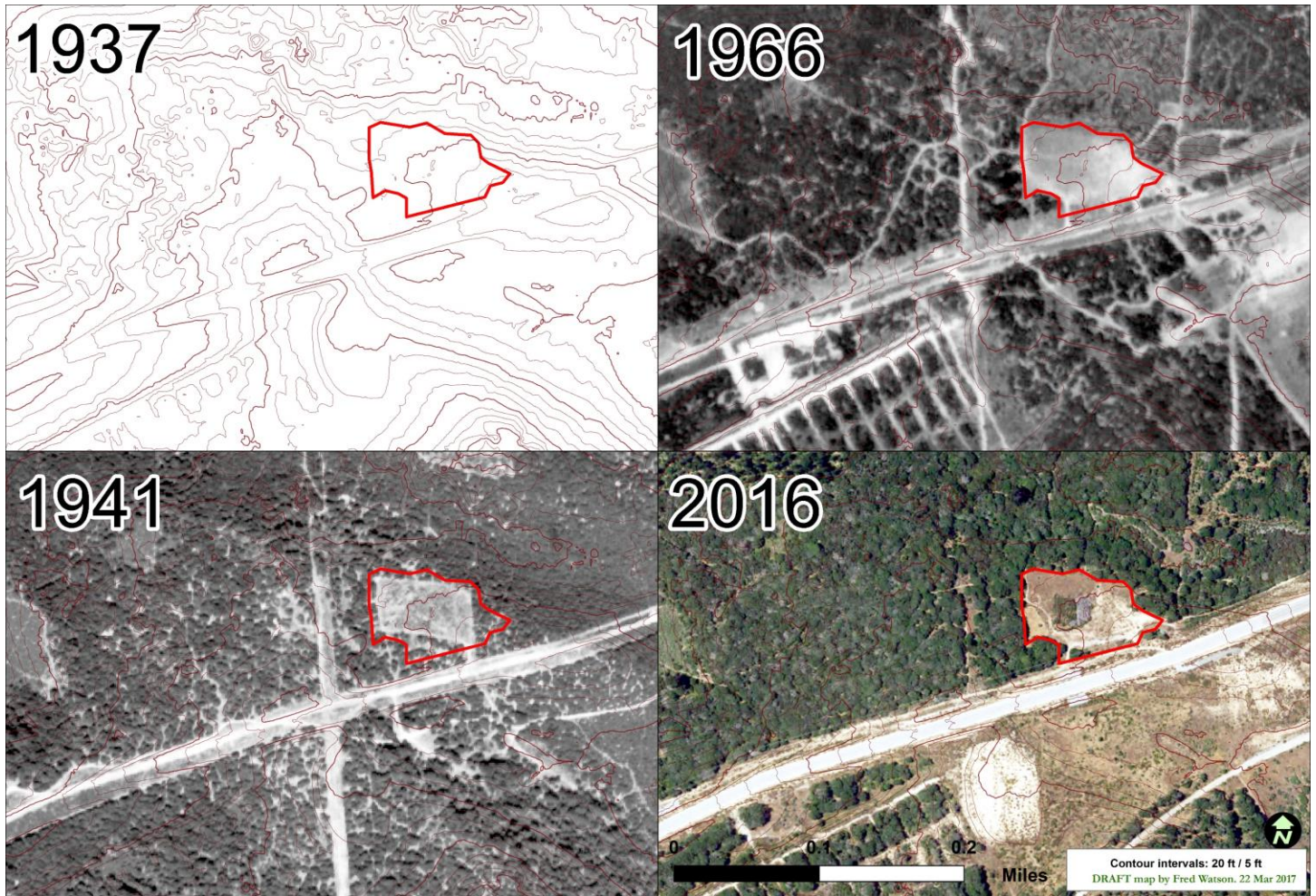


## Option 2



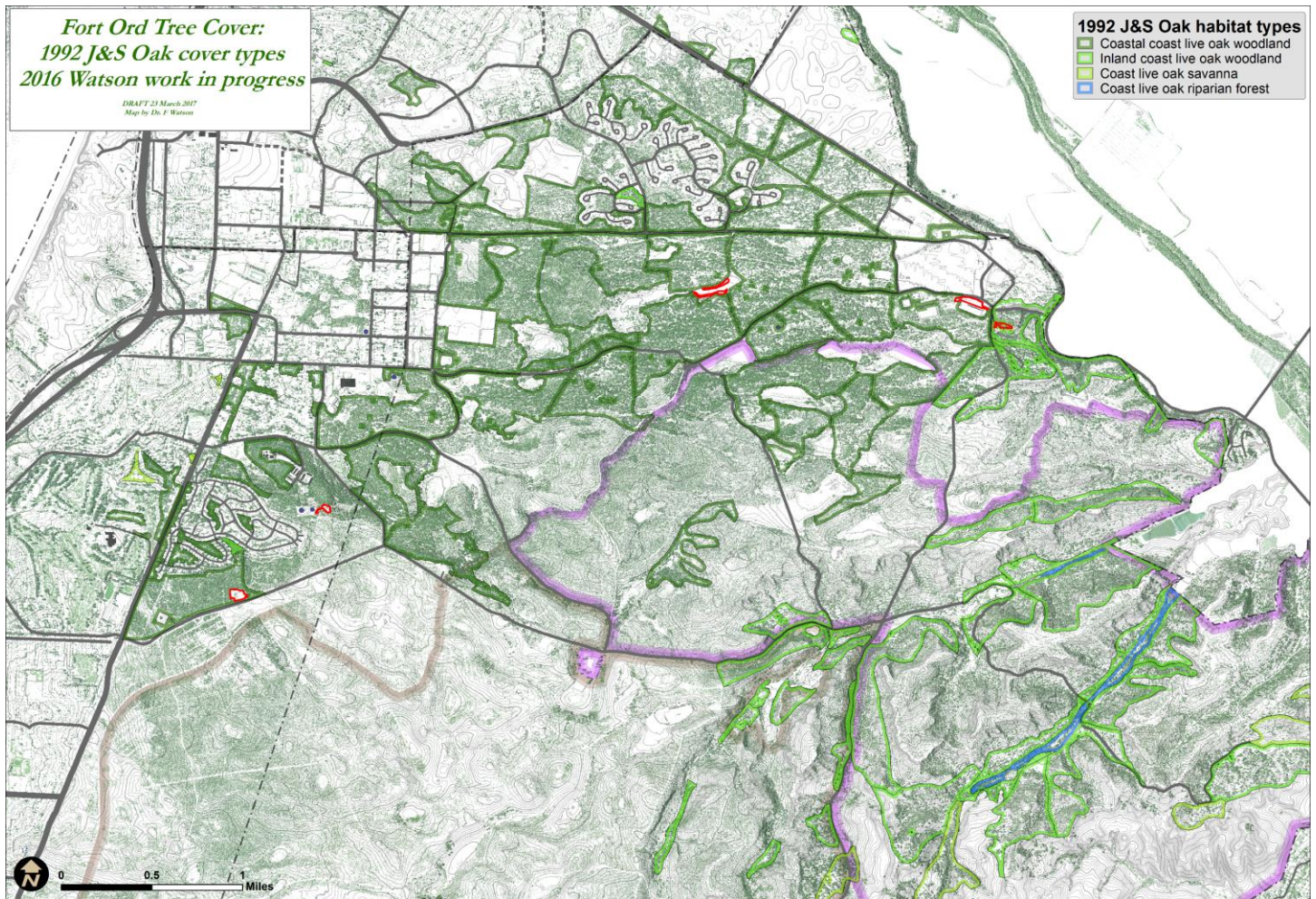


## Option 1



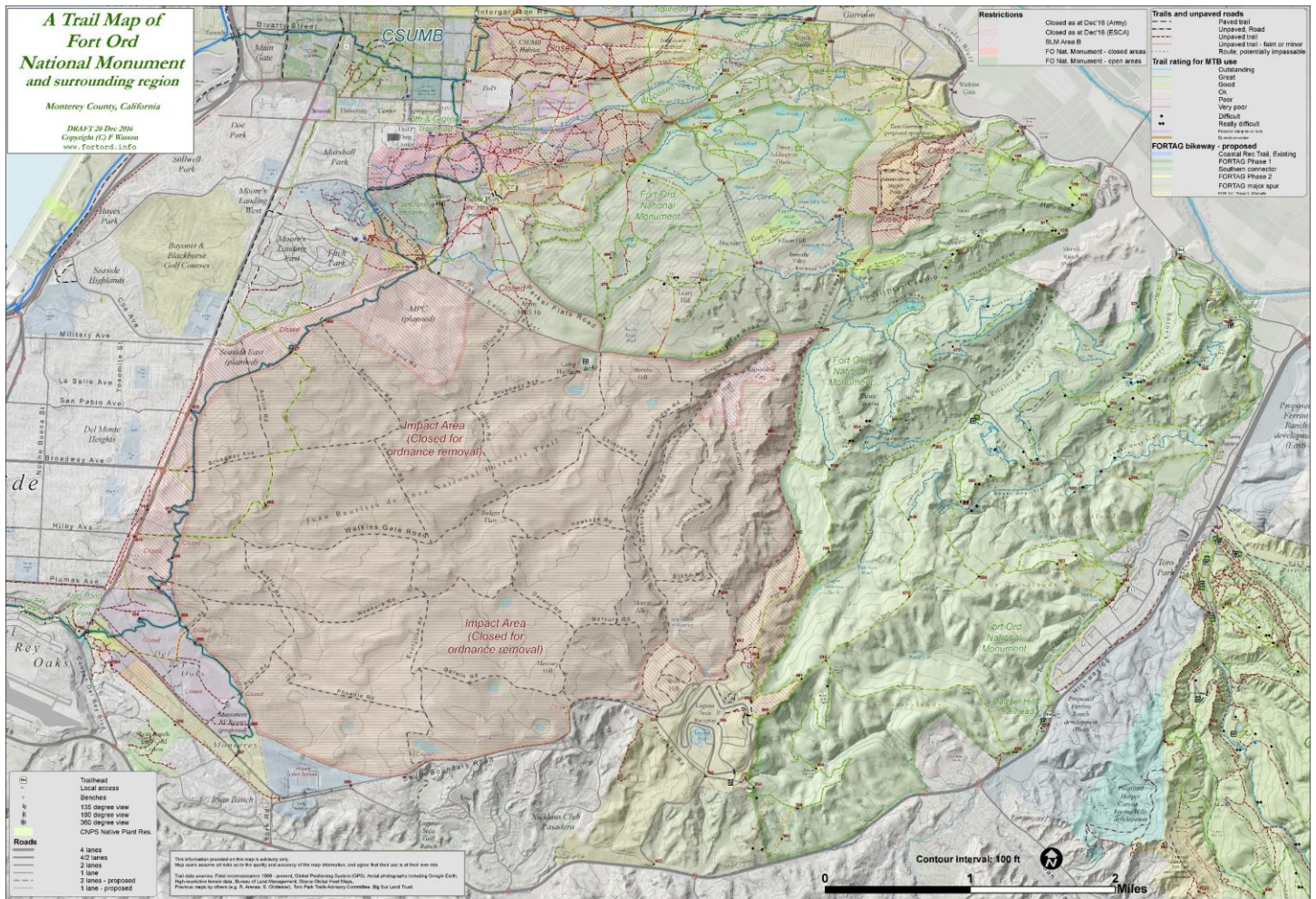


## Tree cover / oak cover – two approaches to mapping





# Trail map



## Comment on Agenda Item 4 – PG&E Tower Replacement

1. The level of detail provided in the Vegetation Impact and Restoration Plan is excellent. The plan reveals that great care has been taken to ensure minimal impact to the natural environment, and to communicate this effectively to the public.
2. The anticipated duration of construction activities is not stated.
3. Activities at the Gigling Rd site will impede a popular mountain bike trail (the “Sidewalk Trail”). If the duration of activities is more than a week or two, then it would be welcomed if a plan could be made for notifying trail users of an alternate path. The plan should also include assurance that the trail will be returned to its original condition – hardpacked single-track – or that a bypass trail segment could be constructed.